

## More millions misused in health

THE KWAZULU-Natal legislature's health portfolio committee said it had made "astounding discoveries" of irregular expenditure related to mobile clinics, including a three-year R52.5 million lease.

However, some of the "astounding discoveries" detailed in a statement released by committee chairperson Yusuf Bhamjee were widely reported on by the media three years ago and are the subject of an investigation by the public protector.

"In a meeting held (on Friday) the portfolio committee on health uncovered shocking wastage of taxpayers' money by the department of health in KZN.

"These revelations came about when the portfolio committee held its normal oversight meeting as mandated by the constitution, namely, to oversee government departments, and in this case the department of health," Bhamjee said in the statement.

The statement detailed how the department spent R50m on buying about 95 23-seater vehicles. "The department further leased one more bus for 36 months at a cost of about R52m. The contract ended in 2016. However, the department extended it from April to July 2016," the statement said.

It is the discovery of the leased bus that is surprising, as the now defunct SA Press Association (Sapa) reported in January 2015 that the KZN health department had awarded the R61m tender to two companies – Mzansi Lifecare and Mobile Satellite Technologies.

Mzansi Lifecare was awarded a tender to lease a truck and trailer equipped with a standard X-ray machine and ultrasound to the department for R52.5m over a period of three years.

The company Mzansi Lifecare was created 17 days before the tender, ZNB 9281/2012-H, was advertised

in the Government Gazette in June 2012.

Former KZN health head of department Sibongile Zungu signed off on the lease in August 2013, agreeing that the department would pay Mzansi Lifecare R1.5m every month to lease the vehicle without staff.

When the tender made headlines in January 2015, it emerged that the department could have purchased outright four similar units from the US.

"That kind of money is crazy. If it cost that much, you already wasted four-and-a-half million (US dollars)," Richard M Dinse, vice-president of LifeLine Mobile, a company based in the US state of Ohio that manufactures such vehicles, said at the time.

"For the price they were charged, LifeLine could have delivered four identical vans to Durban. And it wouldn't be on a lease agreement; they would own all four of the vans." – African News Agency (ANA)